

Town of Newfields
First session of the 2018 Annual Meeting
Deliberative Session Minutes-February 6, 2018

Selectmen: Christopher M. Hutchins, James L. Thompson III, and Michael C. Sununu

Moderator: John M. Hayden

Town Clerk: Sue E. McKinnon

Moderator John Hayden called the meeting to order at 7pm and called for a pledge of allegiance. He introduced the head table and reviewed the rules and procedures for the meeting.

Article 1. Shall the Town raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$1,592,388? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$1,586,309 which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Town of Newfields or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. Selectmen recommend the \$1,592,388 as set forth on said budget.

Michael Sununu said that the overall operating budget has increased by 2%. The most significant change is the cost of switching to Newmarket Dispatch for dispatch services, beginning March 1, 2018. The cost for dispatch is being split between the Police and Fire Departments.

Michael Sununu added that when working through the budget there was an oversight in the recommended increase for the Police Department. The police line should be increased by \$6,758 for a total operating budget of 1,599,146.

Questions about the operating budget were addressed.

Mike Price asked about the amount of Emergency Management. Last year \$15,000 was appropriated, actual amount spent was \$3,000 and the proposed budget is \$18,000. Michael Sununu explained that Emergency Management equipment upgrades need to be done this year.

Deb Rimbaud asked what the difference in cost is between Rockingham County Dispatch and Newmarket Dispatch and why we made the change. Michael Sununu said the total cost for Newmarket is \$28,000 and Rockingham County was free.

Fire Chief Jeff Buxton said the change was made because it is a matter of safety. The \$28,000 is a fraction of the cost of our previous contract with Newmarket. In 2011, Newmarket charged

us \$43,000 for dispatch services and wanted \$55,000 for the following year. The Town opted to try out Rockingham County Dispatch because it was free. Our dispatch services have been with them for the past 6-7 years.

Jeff Buxton said there are multiple reasons for the change. Rockingham County is a large county and they are very busy. They dispatch to 17 fire departments. It is difficult to get through to them. They have upgraded their system and done patches and it is still difficult to reach them. Quite often calls need to be made by phone.

Jeff Buxton added that the fire department currently works closely with Newmarket and has a good relationship with them. When calling 911 the response time is longer through Rockingham County. Newmarket is a smaller dispatch service. Response times through Newmarket can be 3-4 minutes quicker. The rate with Newmarket is reasonable and Jeff expects it will remain that way.

Police Chief Nate Liebenow said officer safety is one reason for the change. Newmarket can be in town within minutes for backup. They have a personalized relationship with the Newmarket officers and communication is significantly better. It is in the best interest of the Town to make the change.

Peter Clark asked if Newmarket services other towns. Jeff said they do not dispatch for other towns anymore. We will be the only one.

Mike Todd asked why the cost of street lighting has decreased. Michael Sununu reported that all street lights have been switched over to LED lights and we are saving a significant amount of money. The cost of the new lights will be paid back in approximately 18 months.

Mike Price asked if the cost to light the Stratham bridge is somewhere in the budget. Michael Sununu said it is not. There has been some discussion about turning the bridge lights back on with the cost being shared between Newmarket, Stratham and Newfields. The other towns do not want to participate.

A motion was made by Michael Sununu and seconded by Ralph Gray to amend the operating budget to \$1,599,146; adding \$6,758 to the police line. All were in favor of the amendment and the motion carried.

Article 1 as amended shall be placed on the ballot.

Article 2. Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$70,000 for the purpose of constructing a sidewalk to Old Lee Rd? Not recommended by Selectmen 2-1

Jamie Thompson spoke in favor of the warrant article. He said last year we appropriated \$15,000 to design the expansion of the sidewalk from Meadow Rd to Old Lee Rd. He would like to see the expansion of sidewalks throughout the town. The portion of the road from

Meadow to Old Lee is not the greatest to walk on and it is difficult for anyone handicapped traveling in a wheelchair.

Mike Todd mentioned that developers with projects in town have been charged sidewalk fees, in lieu of building sidewalks and that money is placed in the sidewalk fund. Jamie replied that there is little money left in that fund after the construction of the previous sidewalk from the school to Meadow Rd.

Mike Price asked for the total project cost. Jamie Thompson stated that the total cost is \$77,000 with about \$7,000 coming from the balance of the sidewalk expendable trust fund. The town has applied for grants and matching funds but has had no success in obtaining funding.

Mike Todd asked Road Agent Brian Knipstein about the cost of maintaining a new sidewalk. Brian said the maintenance is minimal for 600 feet of sidewalk. The State does require the Town to install vertical granite curbing which does add to the cost of the build.

Maggie Doane asked for the other Selectmen's reasoning for not supporting the warrant article.

Chris Hutchins was not in favor of the sidewalk expansion due to a budget perspective. He does support building the sidewalk in the future because it is a benefit to public safety, but he felt this year wasn't the right time.

Michael Sununu was not in favor of the sidewalk expansion because he felt it wasn't the best use of \$77,000. In his opinion, there are better ways to spend the money such as fixing the entrance to the town hall parking lot or upgrading the sidewalks in the main part of town.

Maggie Doane is in favor of the sidewalk. It is important for the safety of the children, walkers and joggers.

Tom Rogers asked if the children on Old Lee Rd walk to school. Maggie Doane replied that they are bussed.

John Hayden added that the Selectmen must make a recommendation on warrant articles with money and after a vote of 2-1 the warrant article is not recommended by Selectmen.

Deb Rimbaud asked if the amount of the article can be modified and whether it can be added to the Sidewalk Capital Reserve Fund. John replied that the money cannot be added to the capital reserve fund.

Jamie Thompson stated that there is about \$7,000 left in the sidewalk fund. Most of the money in the fund was used up with the last sidewalk construction.

Steve Shope spoke in favor of the sidewalk. He would like to see it for safety purposes. He has had some close calls traveling along the portion of road between Old Lee Rd and Meadow Rd.

Article 2 shall be placed on the ballot as written.

Article 3. Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$30,000 to be added to the Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund previously established, for the future purchase of a new fire truck? Recommended by Selectmen

Chris Hutchins said that this is the 7th year we have appropriated money for a fire truck. Fire Chief Jeff Buxton said the department has no immediate plans to replace the truck but when it comes time to purchase it, the amount of the yearly warrant article will most likely increase. The cost of a new truck is \$425,000-\$550,000.

There was no discussion. Article 3 shall be placed on the ballot as written.

Article 4. Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$15,000 to be added to the Rescue Equipment Capital Reserve Fund previously established? Recommended by Selectmen.

Chris Hutchins stated that this is the 3rd year of this appropriation and the equipment will be purchased this year. Jeff Buxton said that this article increased by \$5,000 over last year. He has evaluated several sets of equipment for purchase but has not received bids. He is expecting the cost to be \$28,000-\$32,000. The final cost will be brought before the Selectmen for authorization. Any money not used will be turned back to the Town. The existing equipment is 43 years old and inoperable.

Article 4 shall be placed on the ballot as written.

Article 5. Shall the Town vote to change the status of Cuba Road from a Class VI road to a Class A Trail? The purpose of this article is to maintain the current recreational uses of the road while allowing the use of Town funds to maintain and improve the trails as necessary. Recommended by the Selectmen

Steve Shope spoke in favor of the change in road status. The Conservation Commission and townspeople would like the change to allow town funds to be used for repairs. When gates and bars are installed on a road and it is not maintained it becomes a Class VI road, preventing the town from maintaining the bridge. As a Class A Trail, the Town can spend money on the road and apply for grants. The NH Bureau of Trails said a town vote would be needed to change the status of the road.

Snowmobiles and foot traffic are allowed on a Class A Trail. The gates will remain locked.

Road Agent Brian Knipstein suggested amending the warrant article because the road is maintained up to the last existing residence. Only a portion of the road needs to be classified as a Class A Trail. The Exeter portion of the road will remain a Class VI road. The snowmobile club has already repaired the bridge.

A motion was made by Chris Hutchins and seconded to amend the article to: "Shall the Town vote to change the status of Cuba Road, on only the closed portion of the roadway delineated by a trail

gate, from a Class VI road to a Class A Trail? The purpose of this article is to maintain the current recreational uses of the road while allowing the use of Town funds to maintain and improve the trails as necessary. “

The amendment was voted on and passed. Article 5 as amended shall be placed on the ballot for a vote.

Article 6. Shall the Town vote to appoint the Cemetery Trustees as agents to expend from the Hilton (Newlin) Cemetery Care Expendable Trust Fund previously established in 2003 for the improvement and restoration of the Hilton Cemetery?

Michael Sununu said all this article does is assign the Cemetery Trustees as agents to expend from the fund. There was no discussion. Article 6 shall be placed on the ballot as written.

Article 7. Shall the Town vote to create an expendable trust fund under the provisions of RSA 31:19-a, to be known as the Cemetery Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund, for the purpose of care and maintenance of the town cemeteries? Funding for this Cemetery Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund will be from the sale of cemetery plots in accordance with RSA 289:2-a. The Cemetery Trustees will be the agent for this fund. Recommended by Selectmen

Tom Rogers explained that this article creates an expendable trust fund which will be used to maintain cemeteries.

Article 7 shall be placed on the article as written.

Article 8. Shall the Town vote to have funds received from the sale of cemetery plots in the Newfields Town Cemeteries deposited in the previously established Cemetery Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund, under the provisions of RSA 289:2-a? If the Town votes not to establish a Cemetery Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund, in accordance with state statutes, the proceeds from the sale of cemetery plots will go into the Newfields General Fund. Recommended by Selectmen

Tom Rogers stated that this is part two of establishing the fund. The previous article established the expendable trust fund and this article funds it with the sale of cemetery plots. If the fund fails to be created, the money from the sale of plots will go in the general fund.

Article 8 shall be placed on the ballot as written.

Article 9. Shall the Town vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 72:28-b, “All Veterans” Tax Credit? If adopted, the credit will be available to any resident, or the spouse or surviving spouse of any resident, who (1) served not less than 90 days on active service in the armed forces of the United States and was honorably discharged or an officer honorably separated from services and is not eligible for or receiving a credit under RSA 72:28 or RSA 72:35. If adopted, the credit granted will be \$500, the same amount as the standard or optional veterans’ tax credit voted by the Town of Newfields under RSA 72:28. Recommended by Selectmen

Chris Hutchins said this property tax relief is for all veterans, not just those who served in a time of conflict. There was no discussion. Article 9 shall be placed on the ballot as written.

Article 9 shall be placed on the ballot as written.

Article 10. Shall Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$17,900 for the purpose of mosquito control by town wide adulticiding (truck spraying)? Recommended by Selectmen

A motion was made by Win Fream and seconded by Mike Todd to amend the warrant article to \$0.00. The motion to amend was voted on and failed to pass. Yes-15, No-17

Robin Gray stated that it should be up to the voters whether this passes; not the 30 residents here tonight.

A motion was made by Mike Sununu and seconded by Ralph Gray to restrict reconsideration of the article. The motion was voted on and passed.

Article 10 shall be placed on the ballot for a vote.

Article 11. By citizen's petition, The Town shall urge the New Hampshire State Legislature to join with nineteen other states, including all of the other New England states, in calling upon Congress to amend the United States Constitution and establish that: 1. Constitutional rights were established for people, not corporations and, 2. Money is not speech, and therefore regulating political contributions and spending is not equivalent to limiting political speech. Be it further resolved that the people of Newfields NH hereby instruct our town clerk to inform our state and federal representatives the results of this vote within thirty days, and urge them to enact resolutions and legislation to advance this effort.

Phyllis Mackey spoke on the article. She said this is the 3rd time a petition similar to this has been on the town ballot. The wording is much clearer than in previous citizen's petitions. 79 communities have passed a similar article.

Michael Sununu said he did not like the town ballot being used for political issues whether they are conservative or liberal. Residents come together at this meeting to discuss matters relevant to the town. The passing of this article implies that the majority of the town agrees with it. It is a valid discussion but not appropriate for our ballot. The town ballot is to be used to govern the Town. The ballot is non-partisan; it is not republican vs. democrat.

Connie Murphy suggested bringing the warrant article to a State Constitutional Convention for discussion.

Michael Sununu added that we do not want our ballot littered with several articles like this. It is detrimental to the Town.

Win Fream agreed with Michael Sununu. He suggested having a meeting to educate people and then discuss issues like these with our Legislators.

Sandra Maisey asked about the petitioned warrant article being amended or removed from the ballot. John Hayden replied that the article cannot be removed. It can be amended providing the subject matter does not change.

Article 11 shall be placed on the ballot as written.

Article 12. By citizen's petition, shall the Town express its support to Governor Sununu for New Hampshire to join Maine and Massachusetts and study the feasibility of developing offshore wind power in the Gulf of Maine. The Town of Newfields will join Dover, Durham and Portsmouth in providing written notice urging Governor Sununu to request that the Bureau of ocean Energy Management form an intergovernmental task force. A bipartisan NH legislative committee studied the potential for offshore wind in 2014 and recommended the establishment of this task force. Floating wind turbines located far offshore in federal waters usually are not visible from land. The buildings of offshore wind farms will bring a significant number of jobs and revenue to New Hampshire.

Phyllis Mackey spoke in favor of the article and said this is not a bi-partisan issue. The reason she is bringing it forward is because on New Hampshire Public Radio the Governor stated he was not opposed to people bringing forward the case to form a task force. The passing of the article will send a message to the Governor that Newfields is behind authorizing the process to begin. Senator Russell Prescott voted in favor of developing offshore wind power. There is a huge amount of wind potential for power along our shoreline.

Michael Sununu does not agree that the article is not bi-partisan. In his opinion, any resident of Newfields can express their opinion directly to the Governor who lives here in Town.

Marc Brown stated that there is currently legislation being brought forward in NH. The NH State Legislature is the venue to bring these issues to. Anyone can go to Concord and testify or email testimony to their Representatives. This is not the place and the article should not be on the ballot.

With no further business to discuss, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue E. McKinnon